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Victims of Nazi Terror in Vienna: Legally Mandated Assistance and Social Democratic Patronage, 1945–48

Matthew Berg

Beginning in the 1980s and continuing into the 1990s, historians have examined how the *Opfermythos* (victim myth) served as a convenient foundation for postwar Austrian identity.¹ It was embraced by all three political parties and accepted by the victorious powers, despite occupation and denazification. For Austrians, caring for those affected by the war in its immediate aftermath was a non-partisan concern, although they weighed various categories of experience somewhat differently. For instance, officials at the local, provincial, and federal levels in the new Second Republic recognized the breadth and depth of the Austrian and international displaced populations' needs—housing, nourishment, medical care, economic recovery—and worked with the victorious powers and international donors to address them.² However, attending to the

1 On the Moscow Declaration and both official and informal Austrian references to it, as well as to Austrians as victims after 1945, see Robert H. Keyserlingk, *Austria in World War II: An Anglo-American Dilemma* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Günter Bischof, "Die Instrumentalisierung der Moskauer Erklärung nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg," *Zeitgeschichte* 20 (1993): 345–366. Meinrad Ziegler and Waltraud Kannonier-Finster eds., *Österreichs Gedächtnis: Über Erinnern und Vergessen der NS-Vergangenheit*, 2. Auflage (Vienna-Cologne-Weimar: Böhlau, 1997); Anton Pelinka and Erika Weinzierl eds., *Das große Tabu: Österreichs Umgang mit seiner Vergangenheit*, 2. Auflage (Vienna: Verlag Österreich, 1997); Gerhard Botz, "Geschichte und kollektives Gedächtnis in der Zweiten Republik: 'Opferthese,' 'Lebenslüge' und Geschichtstabus in der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung," and Brigitte Bailer, "Alle waren Opfer: der selektive Umgang mit den Folgen des Nationalsozialismus," in *Inventur 1945/55: Österreich im ersten Jahrzehnt der Zweiten Republik*, ed. Wolfgang Kos and Georg Rigele (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1996), 51–85, and 181–200, respectively; Siegfried Göllner, "... die erbarmungslose Maschinerie ...": Die Diskreditierung der Entnazifizierungsgesetzgebung im Rahmen der Integration ehemaliger NationalsozialistInnen in das österreichische Opferkollektiv," in *Zeitgeschichte* 36, no. 5 (2009): 324–339.

2 The scholarship treating war-related refugee populations across Europe is a rich one. They include Sharif Gemie et al., *Outcast Europe: Refugees and Relief Workers in an Era of Total War, 1936–48* (London and New York: Continuum, 2012); Jessica Reinisch and Elizabeth White ed., *The Disentanglement of Populations: Migration, Expulsion and Displacement in Post-War Europe, 1944–1949* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Anna Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism: Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011); G. Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); idem, "Between Relief and Politics: Refugee Humanitarianism in Occupied Germany 1945–1946," in *Journal of* [Continued on following page]

well-being of Austrian targets of Nazi terror (and, if deceased, their next-of-kin) and of ex-POWs was fraught with competing emotional, social, and political significance. Because these two groups, POWs and victims of Nazi terror, fell under the category of *Opfer* in popular understandings, affected individuals and their advocates engaged in competition for moral claims to welfare assistance—and thus actual benefits and official patronage. There can be no doubt that targets of Nazi persecution qualified as victims, whether they had been imprisoned or forced to lead underground existences. Yet, given the Moscow Declaration's wording, POWs—as long as they had not been Nazis—could also fall under this rubric without challenging the integrity of victim status, as it was legally understood, once the war ended.

Historians like Brigitte Bailer-Galanda and Ela Hornung established the foundations for contemporary work on victims' welfare in postwar Austria during the 1990s and early 2000s, respectively.³ Their insightful studies, which focused on debates over federal law and the role of victims' organizations as advocacy and lobbying groups, have contributed significantly to my own work. This paper takes a different approach from theirs in several respects, however. First, my work is part of a broader inquiry that juxtaposes the reintegration of repatriated POWs with care for Viennese civilians who had either suffered incarceration under the Nazi regime, or had lived in hiding in the city to avoid capture. Second, this expanded focus on victims concerns itself with how municipal social democratic authorities

[Footnote 2, continued] *Contemporary History* 43, no. 3 (2008): 437–449; Pertti Ahonen, *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and its Aftermath* (Oxford: Berg, 2008); Gernot Heiss and Oliver Rathkolb ed., *Asylland wider Willen: Flüchtlinge in Österreich im europäischen Kontext seit 1914* (Vienna: Jugend & Volk, 1995); Christoph Reinprecht, *Zurückgekehrt: Identität und Bruch in der Biographie österreichischer Juden* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1992); Mark Wyman, *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945–1951* (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1989); and Thomas Albrich, *Exodus durch Österreich: die jüdischen Flüchtlinge 1945–1948* (Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag, 1987). On prisoners of war, see, for example, Richard Lein, *Zurück aus dem Krieg: die Kriegsgefangenen- und Heimkehrerfürsorge der Republik Österreich nach dem 2. Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt/Main and Vienna: Peter Lang, 2006); Bob Moore and Barbara Hatelly-Broad ed., *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, Homecoming and Memory in World War II* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); and James M. Diehl, *The Thanks of the Fatherland: German Veterans After the Second World War* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

3 Brigitte Bailer, *Wiedergutmachung kein Thema: Österreich und die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*, (Vienna: Löcker, 1993) and Ela Hornung, "Hierarchisierung der Opfer. Zur Sozialgesetzgebung für Kriegsoffer nach 1945," in *Konflikte und Kriege im 20. Jahrhundert: Aspekte ihrer Folgen*, ed. Harald Knoll, Peter Ruggenthaler and Barbara Stelzl-Marx (Graz-Vienna-Klagenfurt: Verein zur Förderung v. Folgen nach Konflikten und Kriegen, 2002), 59–72.

sought to balance care for those who opposed the Third Reich, or had been targeted by the regime as opponents, with those who had served the regime in uniform – and how people who sought assistance represented their cases to social authorities. The focus here is not on POWs, but on civilians. Third, I rely on sources—*Opferfürsorgekarte*—to which neither Bailer-Galanda nor Hornung had access, and which serve as essential microhistorical narratives.

I take as my parameters the period between the introduction of the *Opferfürsorgegesetz*, in its restrictive and rather discriminatory form in the summer of 1945, and the law's 1948 revision that placed political and so-called racial victims on equal footing. Given my particular emphasis on rebuilding a social democratic milieu in the capital,⁴ I argue that it is particularly important to explore the vigorous discussion of victimization and antifascism, to examine efforts to alleviate suffering in a polity whose leaders and their constituency publicly emphasized the rhetoric of social justice, and the realities of support services mandated by federal law but administered under social democratic auspices. As the country's largest population center, Vienna was the place of origin, or the final destination, for a significant number of civilians who had experienced life in hiding (so-called *U-Boote*) and others who had been liberated from concentration or labor camps, as well as for returning POWs. Moreover, Vienna had been home to the largest Jewish population in Austria, to especially strident anti-fascist sentiment, and to significant ambivalence toward, or outright embrace of, the National Socialist regime for reasons that ranged from opportunism to conviction.⁵

4 See Matthew Paul Berg, "Reinventing 'Red Vienna' after 1945: Habitus, Patronage, and the Foundations of Municipal Social Democratic Dominance," in *Journal of Modern History* 86, No. 3 (2014): 603–632.

5 The rich historiography on the themes of anti-semitism, Nazi sympathies, and antifascism in Austria includes: Ilana Fritz Offenberger, *The Jews of Nazi Vienna, 1938–1945: Rescue and Destruction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Evan Burr Bukey, *Jews and Inter-marriage in Nazi Austria* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); idem, *Hitler's Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era, 1938–1945* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Dirk Hänisch, *Die österreichischen NSDAP-Wähler. Eine empirische Analyse ihrer politischen Herkunft und ihres Sozialprofils* (Vienna-Cologne-Weimar: Böhlau, 1998); Bruce F. Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution: A History of Austrian Anti-Semitism* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Helmut Konrad, "Das Werben der NSDAP um die Sozialdemokraten 1933–1938" and Hans Schafrank, "NSDAP und Sozialisten nach dem Februar 1934" in *Arbeitserschaft und Nationalsozialismus in Österreich*, ed. Rudolf G. Ardel and Hans Hautmann (Vienna and Zurich: Europaverlag, 1990), 73–90 and 91–128, respectively; Robert Schwarz, "Nazi Wooing of Austrian Social Democracy between *Anschluss* and War," in *Conquering the Past: Austrian Nazism Yesterday and Today*, ed. F. Parkinson (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 125–136; Emmerich Tálos, Ernst Hanisch, and Wolfgang Neugebauer ed., *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich 1938–1945* (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1988); Everhard Holtmann, *Zwischen Unterdrückung und Befreiung. Sozialistische Arbeiterbewegung und autoritäres Regime in Österreich 1933–1938* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1978).

Categories of “Victims of Nazi Terror in Austria”

Within a few weeks of proclaiming independence in late April 1945, Austrian authorities at the provincial and local levels found themselves confronted with the necessity of providing assistance to “victims of Nazi terror” who resided in their communities, as well as to an influx of people who had been held in labor and concentration camps. Aid could take the form of cash payments and also assistance in obtaining clothing, furniture, household effects, or foodstuffs. The provisional federal government’s *Staatsamt für soziale Verwaltung* offered assurances to regional authorities that the federal state would extend the lion’s share of support.

Federal officials provided the following schema for relief allocation that provincial welfare offices and local welfare centers were to observe. Victims would be categorized according to a distinct rank order system that provided the basis for the *Opferfürsorgegesetz* introduced several weeks later.

Table 1: Federal Categories for Victims of Nazi Terror⁶

Group A: Active Resistance

1. Next-of-kin of:
 - a. slain Austrian freedom fighters (partisans),
 - b. Austrian political prisoners whose activities led to arrest and subsequent murder in Nazi custody,
 - c. Austrian Wehrmacht soldiers or police killed during service [because of resistance to the NS regime (MB)].
2. Political prisoners involved in *organized* illegal political actions for Austria (“subject to rigorous verification”) with:
 - a. more than a three-year term in custody,
 - b. between eighteen and thirty-six months in custody,
 - c. between six and eighteen months in custody.
3. Austrian Freedom Fighters, namely:
 - a. armed partisans,
 - b. participants in illegal political activities for Austrian independence (recognized through central committee or party leadership of political parties),
 - c. those who prevented destruction or removal of vital firms or infrastructure.

⁶ *Staatsgesetzblatt* (hereafter StGBI), Nr. 90/1945, “Gesetz vom 17. Juli 1945 über die Fürsorge für die Opfer des Kampfes um ein freies, demokratisches Österreich”) Opfer-Fürsorgegesetz.”

Group B: Passive Resistance

1. Political prisoners not involved in organized political activity with:
 - a. more than a three-year term in custody,
 - b. between eighteen and thirty-six months in custody,
 - c. between six and eighteen months in custody.
2. Those taken into custody by the Gestapo or military police, including:
 - a. deserters held for at least six months;
 - b. those who had gone into hiding for at least one year;
 - c. those who provided illegal shelter for those in hiding for at least one year.
3. Non-political concentration camp prisoners with:
 - a. more than a three-year term in custody;
 - b. between eighteen and thirty-six months in custody;
 - c. between six and eighteen months in custody.

Group C: Racially or Nationally Persecuted

1. Jews or those who were considered Jews (required to wear the Star of David);
2. "Privileged" Jews (not required to wear Star of David);
3. "First Degree *"Mischlinge"* married to Jews; also "Aryans" persecuted because of nationality [sic].⁷

It is clear that this schema favored those who had engaged in efforts to resist Nazism in the interests of Austrian independence over those the National Socialist regime had pursued as ostensibly biological enemies. Jews and others in Group C were eligible for higher priority consideration *only* if they had also been involved in activities consistent with Group A or B criteria. This discriminatory categorization—one informed, in significant measure, by the *Opfermythos*—would not be dropped until parliament approved a third revision of the *Opferfürsorgegesetz* in February 1949.⁸

⁷ WrStLA, MD A6/2, BA 577/45.

⁸ *Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich* (hereafter BGBl), Stück 12, Nr. 58, 183/1949, 3. Opferfürsorgegesetz-Novelle, ausgegeben am 15. März 1949, Artikel I 2c), 276. See also Bailer, *Wiedergutmachung*.

Vienna's public welfare office communicated this schema to its district satellite branches in a circular dated 7 June 1945. The public welfare office noted, "as a rule, the outlay for apartment rent [...] and aid are to be granted as one-time assistance for a month's duration."⁹ Such limited assistance was not an expression of indifference to applicants' circumstances. Rather, challenges in meeting needs reflected how postwar reconstruction sorely tested Austrian authorities' capacities to attend to pressing shortages of foodstuffs, clothes, medical care, lodging, and other necessities throughout much of the country—but particularly in the capital. Viennese applicants would be referred to a central registration office, the *Zentralregistrierung der Opfer des Naziterrors in Österreich* (also referred to as the *Zentralregistrierungsstelle*) within the public welfare office. Each applicant, or a surviving family member, was to complete a *Fürsorgekarte*. Once approved, this document would function as an identity card for victims of the Nazi regime with a recognized claim. Together with a valid photo ID, an approved *Fürsorgekarte* served as validation of victims' status for all "politically, racially, or nationally [i.e., *ethnically* – MB] oppressed Austrians" in their interactions with state and municipal authorities, and with functionaries of all political parties, trade unions, cooperatives, and professional boards.¹⁰

Between the end of April and the beginning of June 1945, some 8,000 individual cases had been registered, and approximately 1,000 of them thoroughly vetted by a staff of reliable antifascists.¹¹ These officials worked with great dedication but found themselves overwhelmed by the volume of applications. Although the staff expanded to more effectively address the influx of requests—into early 1946, the number of submissions would extend into the tens of thousands—applicants could find themselves waiting months for resolution, often under circumstances of great hardship. Even as aid brought modest alleviation of need, formal recognition of suffering was no less significant to many victims' sense of dignity, particularly once the most challenging period of postwar reconstruction had passed by the end of the 1940s.

My research into welfare assistance for those Viennese oppressed by the National Socialist regime draws on a random, representative sample of some

9 Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (hereafter WrStLA), 1.3.208, Wohlfahrtsamt Allg. Registratur A2 (1945–1949). Magistrat der Stadt Wien, Verwaltungsgruppe X, Wohlfahrtswesen, Abteilung 1, an alle Fürsorgämter, 7. Juni 1945.

10 WrStLA, MD A6/2, BA 577/45, Magistrat der Stadt Wien, Verwaltungsgruppe X, Wohlfahrtswesen, Zentralregistrierung der Opfer des Naziterrors in Österreich – Rundschreiben an alle Staatssekretariate, Parteivorstände der politischen Parteien, Bürgermeister, Stadträte, Fürsorgungsinstitute der Gemeinde Wien und Volkssolidaritätsausschüsse, [n.d.] Mai 1945.

11 WrStLA, MD A1 1945, 678/45, Box 627, 501–802. Hönigsfeld, ehrenamtlicher Leiter, an die Magistratsdirektion, 5. Juni 1945.

3,000 submissions (women and men, categories A, B, and C) out of approximately 12,000 still held in the Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv for the period of June 1945 (when the *Zentralregistrierung der Opfer des Naziterrors* began its work) through March 1946 (in early April 1946, adjudication and administration of welfare cases became the domain of the municipal welfare office). The paper trail for the subsequent years ends there.¹² The *Fürsorgekarte* is a valuable source, for it provides us with a glimpse into the experience of the individual applicant—a microhistory, of sorts.

MAGISTRAT DER STADT WIEN
VERWALTUNGSGRUPPE I
WOHLFARTSWESSEN

Fürsorgekarte Nr. 5475
für die Opfer des Naziterrors

Reg.-Nr. 16720, ausgestellt am 25.10.45.
in Wien, I. Neuer Rainaus

Name **A. Kurt**
geboren am 22.8.26 in **Wien**
heimatberechtigt in **Wien**
Beruf **Hilfsarbeiter**
Wohnort **16. Hübnergasse 12/5.**

und für nachstehende Angehörige:

Name	Geb.-	Name	Geb.-

Gültig bis auf Widerruf!

Verlängerungen:

Gültig bis
Gültig bis
Gültig bis

Durch Kriegseinwirkung vernichtet:

Körper- oder Sachschaden	100%	75%	50%	25%
Familienverhaller				
Wohnung				
Möbel				
Heusral				
Bekleidung				
Geschäft oder Werkstatt				

Siegel

Unterschrift

Kurt A. Kurt

Unterschrift des Bediensteten

12 Latecomers will turn to the following welfare locations [in Vienna]: political prisoners with at least six months incarceration to the *Volksolidarität* [...]; racially persecuted to the action committee representing those persecuted according to their respective ancestry [...]; those incarcerated in concentration camps to the *KZ-Verband* [...]; other Nazi victims to the welfare offices in their respective locations of registered residence.” WrStLA, MD A1 1946, 758/46, Zentralreistringungsstelle der Opfer des Naziterrors; Auflassung der Dienststelle. Aktenvermerk vom 2. April 1946.

Reg.-Nr. 26720

Name: [REDACTED] KWEU

Geb. am 22.8.20 in [REDACTED]

Zuständig nach Wien:

Beruf "Hilfsarbeiter"

Wohnort 16. [REDACTED] 14/0

Mitgezeichnet:

1. Partane
2. Hies, pol. K.
3. KZ-Häftling
4. Pol. Häftling
5. Fahnenzeichen
6. U-Boot
7. [REDACTED]
8. [REDACTED]
9. Mi. [REDACTED]
10. A-Mischsteil
11. Gewerbebeitrag
12. Cambrögel
13. Studienbeitrag

Durch Naziferror verloren:

1. Haus, Grundstück
2. Wohnung
3. Möbel
4. Hausrat
5. Bekleidung
6. Cassini
7. Werkstoff
8. Bargeld
9. Schmuck
10. Wertpapiere

14. Einbußgeld
15. Erschossen 1939 auf der Flucht
16. Erschlagen in Belgien
17. Versagt
18. I. d. Hdt. gest.
19. Verschleppt 1942 nach Polen
zu 19. Bruder Walter [REDACTED] 1934
zu 19. Vater David [REDACTED] 1934

Datum 25.10.45

25.

Unterschrift

The great majority of applicants for *Opferfürsorge* in my large sample noted that they belonged to Group C, (racially or “nationally” persecuted), followed by a notably smaller number affiliated with the KPO. Social Democrats formed the third largest population, and Catholic conservatives the fourth. There is no compelling reason to doubt that my findings are representative of the sum total of applications, given the National Socialist regime’s particular zeal in targeting Jews and Sinti/Roma, and the antipathy directed towards Communists.

A report to the city manager's office from 30 January 1946, reproduced in Table 2, reveals the total number of approved claims from the onset of *Zentralregistrierungsstelle* work in June 1945 to the end of January 1946.

A massive backlog of submissions processed by overworked reviewers explains only in part why the *Zentralregistrierungsstelle* approved such a relatively small proportion of cases out of the number submitted, which was undoubtedly several times larger. Corroborating evidence in the form of affidavits represented the touchstone for successful resolution of cases. Many applicants simply did not—or could not—provide them.

If the *Fürsorgekarten* provide us with rough sketches of how people communicated their experiences of victimization under the National Socialist

Table 2: Number of Claims Approved in Vienna June 1945 – late January 1946¹³

- Partisans (fallen Austrian freedom fighters; benefits to family members): 7
- Political prisoners (executed; benefits to family members): 869
- Members of German Wehrmacht (executed; benefits to family members): 227
- Political prisoners arrested for treasonous political activity
 - more than three years: 634
 - less than three years: 418
 - less than eighteen months: 398
- Active (armed) resistance fighters: 273
- Illegal political activity for an independent Austria, acknowledged by a ranking political party official: 24
- Prevention of the destruction of essential infrastructure: 22
- Prisoners held for passive resistance
 - more than three years: 651
 - less than three years: 484
 - six to eighteen months: 1,261
- Wehrmacht deserters, at least six months on the run: 48
- U-boot [person living in hiding] for at least one year: 329
- Providing illegal shelter for at least one year: 22
- Non-political concentration camp inmates
 - more than three years: 622
 - less than three years: 484
 - six to eighteen months: 438
- Racially persecuted [Jews, “privileged Jews,” “Mischlinge,” Sinti/Roma, etc.]: 840
 - non-political among the above: 66

Total number of approved cases: 8,177

¹³ Ibid., Magistrat der Stadt Wien, Verwaltungsgruppe X – Wohlfahrtswesen (Dr. Rieger) die Magistratsdirektion, zu Handen Herrn Senatsrat Dr. Balacs, 30. Januar 1946. Later in 1946 Viennese municipal administrative units were reorganized, and Wohlfahrtswesen became Verwaltungsgruppe IV.

regime, supporting materials—above all affidavits, but, where present, also applicants' personal statements and other supporting materials—offer richer narratives crafted with great intentionality. The forms of evidence that had been considered essential for successful adjudication of an applicant's submission, identified by the director of the group responsible for issuing *Fürsorgekarten* in a memo to the city manager's office, are reproduced in Table 3.

Such materials are not only important sources for the study of everyday life between 1938 and 1945; they also offer insights into the ways applicants negotiated the bureaucratic process required to confirm victim status and receive emergency aid. Combined with personal narratives, particularly when applicants encountered the frustrating steps and halting pace often associated with the confirmation process, these documents illuminate the intersection of lived experience and policy that are the focus of my larger study. While welfare appeals continued after 1945/46, Viennese authorities found themselves particularly overwhelmed with cases during the initial postwar months.

Adjudicating Opferfürsorge between Legal Obligation and Party Patronage

The Social Democratic municipal officials walked a fine line between serving as executors of the party's political goals and as a responsible governing authority for all Viennese, regardless of party affiliation. In the former instance, the Viennese SP strived to reintegrate the Social Democratic *Lager* after a dozen years of illegality under the *Vaterländische Front* dictatorship (VF, also referred to here as the Austrofascist regime) and under Nazi hegemony, first by extending patronage to reliable loyalists with unimpeachable antifascist credentials, and secondarily to non-Social Democrats with requisite expertise and similar antifascist bona fides. Dedicated Social Democrats tended to assume that reconstitution of the party meant priority treatment – not only when it came to expectations of municipal civil service or Viennese party organization employment, but also with respect to claims and applications regulated by federal law.¹⁴ Yet party members in the municipal civil service were obligated to function as neutral arbiters whenever party comrades submitted applications or requests to their bureaus. These officials could not legally justify demonstrating favoritism to Social Democrats unless the latter presented cases with merit equal to those presented by party outsiders. Patronage assistance could be extended only wherever it was legally

14 Berg, "Reinventing 'Red Vienna' after 1945," passim.

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14 Berg, "Reinventing 'Red Vienna' after 1945," *passim*.

Table 3: Range of Evidence Expected for Adjudication of Opferfürsorge Claims¹⁵

For next-of-kin: death certificate or unimpeachable witness statement, confirmation of political nature of arrest and of sentence from the municipal district administration of one of the three parties [SPÖ, ÖVP, KPÖ].

For prisoners: protective custody order, confirmation from police prison, order for arrest or sentence, unimpeachable testimony from fellow prisoners, political party confirmation [SPÖ, ÖVP, KPÖ] or confirmation from the *Volkssolidarität* or *KZ-Verband*.¹⁶

For partisans: confirmation from state police, Hofburg section [...], military documents from Allied troops.

For deserters: sentence or communiqué from court or military authority, confirmation from the *Komitee der Wehrmachtshäftlingen*.

For *U-Boote*: affirmation from person who provided shelter and two witnesses, confirmation from ration card office [confirming that *U-Boote* was not registered to receive ration card – MB], personal documents.

For those who provided illegal shelter: affirmation from *U-Boote* and two witnesses confirmed by a notary.

For racially or nationally [sic] oppressed: Personal documents such as Jewish ID card, documentation from faith community, or, for gypsies [sic], confirmation from mayor's office.

15 WrStLA, MD A1 1946, 758/46, Verwaltungsgruppe X – Wohlfahrtswesen (Dr. Rieger) an die Magistratsdirektion, zu Handen Herrn Senatsrat Dr. Balacs, 30. Januar 1946.

16 The implementation decree issued by the Federal Ministry for Social Administration in connection with the *Opferfürsorgegesetz* noted that "the Gestapo issued no arrest confirmations whatsoever and collected protective custody orders and certificates of discharge from concentration camps when the prisoner was released. Thus, official documents related to arrest, release, or carrying out of sentence cannot be furnished in many cases." The supporting evidence referred to above represented suitable alternatives to those documents. See WrStLA 1.3.208, Wohlfahrtsamt, Allgemeine Registratur A2 (1945–49), "Sonderabdruck aus Heft 1/2 von 1946 der 'ämtliche Nachrichten des Bundesministeriums für soziale Verwaltung,' 1. Durchführungserlaß, Zl. IV-8840/16/46 zum Gesetz vom 17. Juni 1945, StGBI. Nr. 90, und zur Verordnung des Staatsamtes für soziale Verwaltung im Einvernehmen mit dem Staatsamte für Finanzen vom 31. Oktober 1945, BGBl. Nr. 34/1946 (Opfer-Fürsorgeverordnung)," 1.

possible, discrete, or ostensibly required by extenuating circumstances. This practice held as true for *Opferfürsorge* as it did, for example, in the adjudication of housing claims under the federal *Wohnungsanforderungsgesetz*. This tension is revealed in the brief survey of representative examples offered below.

It should be noted that Social Democrats understood *Opferfürsorge* in two respects. On the one hand, it extended assistance to those who had suffered at the hands of the Nazis, as the three-tiered federal categorization required. Yet, on the other hand, Social Democrats saw *Opferfürsorge*—given the law's emphasis on resistance in the interest of an independent and democratic Austria—as an opportunity to gain formal recognition of sacrifices made and suffering incurred in resistance to the Austrofascist regime. This served several purposes. First, it would make a contribution to offsetting the material losses incurred by those who had been held in prison or in the notorious Wollersdorf concentration camp. Second, insofar as members of the Social Democratic paramilitary, party activists, and underground Revolutionary Socialists waged active resistance against the establishment of an anti-democratic regime, individual claims for suffering between 1934 and 1938 gave applicants the satisfaction of a poke in the eye to those former bitter adversaries. Although former Austrofascist officials were subsequently targeted by the Nazis, and could submit claims for victims' assistance, Social Democrats made it a point to remind *Volkspartei* officials and the broader public of the ÖVP's unresolved relationship to its authoritarian precursor whenever an opportunity presented itself. The efforts of *Volkssolidarität* to provide affidavits for applicants from experiences before the Anschluss also served as a reminder.

A few cases illustrate the kind of fate that Social Democrats experienced. The chauffeur Anton A. had been held in Wollersdorf for eight months during 1934 on charges of treason as an illegal Social Democratic activist; the SP district organization for Vienna-Schwechat vouched for his political reliability.¹⁷ The clerk Robert H. was interned five months in Wollersdorf and several other Austrofascist detention facilities, and spent several weeks underground to evade arrest by the Gestapo in 1944. Viennese party authorities confirmed that H. had been active in the party since 1918 in several important capacities and had worked for democracy as a member of the Lower Austrian parliament.¹⁸

17 WrStLA 1.3.2.208 – Opferfürsorge: Fürsorgekartei (1945–46) A 13/1, Fürsorgekartei Nr. 10006.

18 WrStLA 1.3.2.208 – Opferfürsorge: Fürsorgekartei (1945–46) A 13/4, Fürsorgekartei Nr. 9869.

Those affiliated with Austrofascist regime could apply for victims' assistance as long as they met the qualifications for category A or B. For example, forestry official Franz U.'s were less clear. Franz had spent September 1938 through March 1939 in Buchenwald for illegal political activity in support of the since-outlawed Austrofascist regime. He noted that he had also been engaged in an illegal political struggle as a member of the *Heimwehr* in 1928—but at a point in the First Republic when these regional paramilitaries engaged in a struggle to institute authoritarian rule. He, too, qualified for victims' assistance under category A (active resistance). The law stipulated only that an applicant had engaged for an *independent*, but not specifically *democratic*, Austria.

A broader, if not legally mandated, understanding of who qualified as victim of Nazism offer us a glimpse into how the municipal Social Democratic patronage network functioned. Those concerned included returning prisoners of war or those who remained on the home front and sought assistance with political (re)affiliation, housing, employment, securing pensions, or other smaller forms of aid.¹⁹ Indeed, once the SP's Ferdinand Freund took over municipal welfare administration from the Communists in January 1946, a consequence of the resounding social democratic success in the November elections, municipal welfare officials could extend the same sort patronage as colleagues in the *Wohnungsamt* and the *Magistratsdirektion* had begun to provide months earlier. Thus, welfare assistance in kind (shoes, clothing, etc.), when requested by Viennese SP officials and endorsed by party officials in civil administration positions, frequently found its way to needy Viennese who did not meet the legal definition of *Opfer*.

Patronage was not lavish; rather, it took the form of small, but meaningful, forms of assistance to these SP constituents—what we might call *discrete* forms of aid—as long as reputable comrades in the municipal civil service could vouch for them. Normally the needy were constituents and/or civil servants working in SP controlled municipal agencies; in other instances, Social Democrats working in federal ministries contacted the welfare office on the behalf of friends or acquaintances. Although civil servants were expected to fulfill responsibilities with professionalism and within the framework of the law, assistance requests from welfare office

19 Matthew P. Berg, "Adjudicating Lodging: Denazification, Housing Requisition, and Identity in 'Red Vienna,' 1945–48," in *Narrating the City: Histories, Space, and the Everyday*, ed. Wladimir Fischer-Nebmaier, Matthew P. Berg, and Anastasia Christou ed. (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), 175–96; Berg, "Reinventing 'Red Vienna' after 1945; Berg, "Die SPÖ und die Praxis der Entnazifizierung," in *Entnazifizierung zwischen politischem Anspruch, Parteienkonkurrenz und Kaltem Krieg*, ed. Maria Mesner (Vienna and Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005), 145–85.

personnel, or other municipal or even federal officials, made on behalf of others, could serve to reinforce party loyalty and solidarity. Many of these requests involved needy employees; they almost always involved clothing and, especially, shoes.²⁰

In such cases of discretionary aid—and there are hundreds upon hundreds of them—the distinction between humanitarian intervention and cultivating loyalty through patronage was negligible. Yet needy *non*-SPÖ members received these small distributions of clothing, foodstuffs, or even a very modest allocation of cash, too. Welfare office administrators understood that their work could never be distinctly partisan; a considerable minority of Vienna's residents were not Social Democrats, and such heavy-handedness would have been untenable in the wake of eleven years of consecutive single party dictatorships. Nonetheless, the SP were keen to look after their own to the greatest extent possible, given the parameters of the law and broader awareness of cases involving more pressing need among those outside the *Lager*. Responsible and compassionate government reinforced the habitus, and made possible the integration of others, including former Nazis who had been designated *minderbelastet* as per the 1948 amnesty. This shift came close to the same time that revisions to the *Opferfürsorgegesetz* abolished distinctions between “racial” and political victims—a bitter irony not lost on many of those who had experienced Nazi terror.

20 WrStLA 1.3.2.208 – A2 Allg. Reg. nach Registratursgruppe (1945–49), “Ämtliche Veranlassungen” 1946, Obermagsitratsrat Rieger an Herrn Referatsleiter Riedel, 3, 4, and 29 December 1946. See also WrStLA 1.3.2.208 – A2 Allg. Reg. nach Registratursgruppe (1945–49), “Ämtliche Veranlassungen” 1947, Obermagsitratsrat Rieger an Herrn Referatsleiter Riedel, 2 February 1947.